

An introduction to qualitative evaluation



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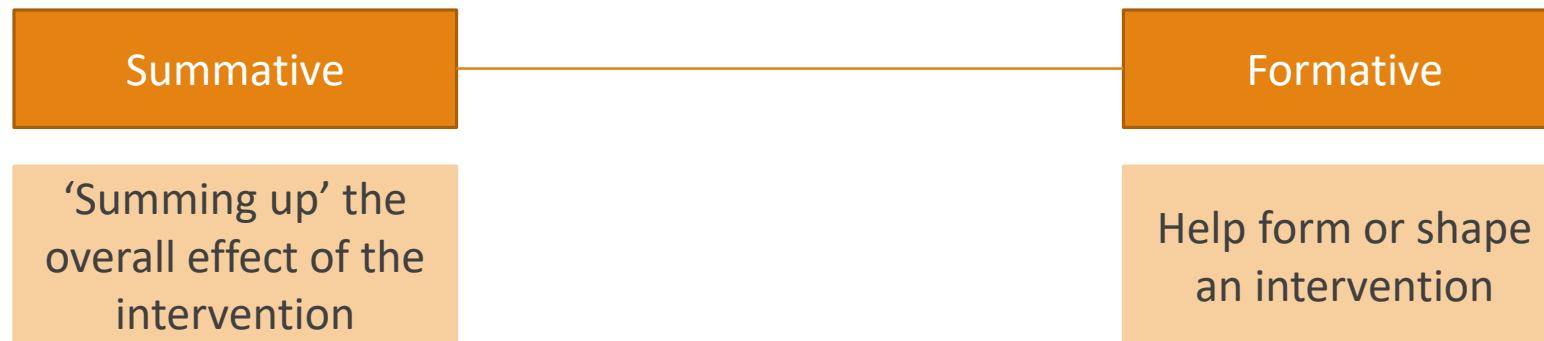
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Evaluations

What is an *evaluation*?

- The process of determining the merit, worth or **value** of something (Scriven 1991)
- Using **systematic, data-based** inquiries about whatever is being evaluated (AEA 2004)
- A process undertaken for purposes of **improvement, decision-making, enlightenment and persuasion** (Shadish et al. 1990).



Qualitative evaluations

- Focus on the ***perspectives*** of the participants (implementers, users, other stakeholders)
- It can reveal and clarify the ***internal dynamic of a program or intervention***
- It is flexible with the design and use of methods and techniques to approach ***social processes as these occur in practice***
- It supports the need to reflect on the importance of knowing the ***social context*** (theoretical element)
- It implies ***direct and personal contact*** with the people involved in the program

Patton (1990)



Evaluation research questions

What is the **programme theory** underpinning the programme?

What are the **barriers and facilitators** encountered in implementation?

What is the impact of wider **contextual factors** in shaping implementation?

What quantifiable impacts and costs does the programme have within different contexts?

What potential benefits and cost-savings, if any, does the programme have?

What are the **lessons for implementing** similar programmes across different contexts?



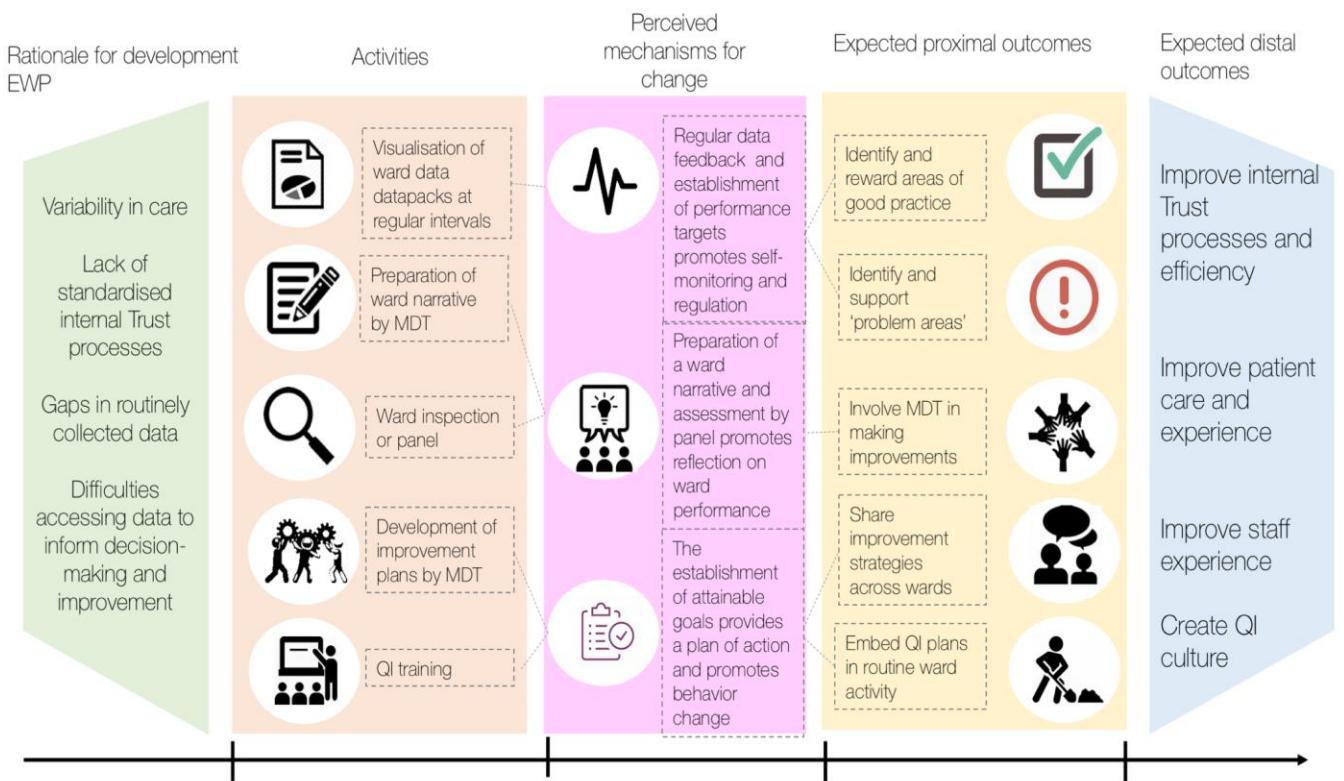
Programme theories

Work back from desired change

Sets out what needs to be improved and why

What changes are likely to deliver improvement

Action required for changes to happen

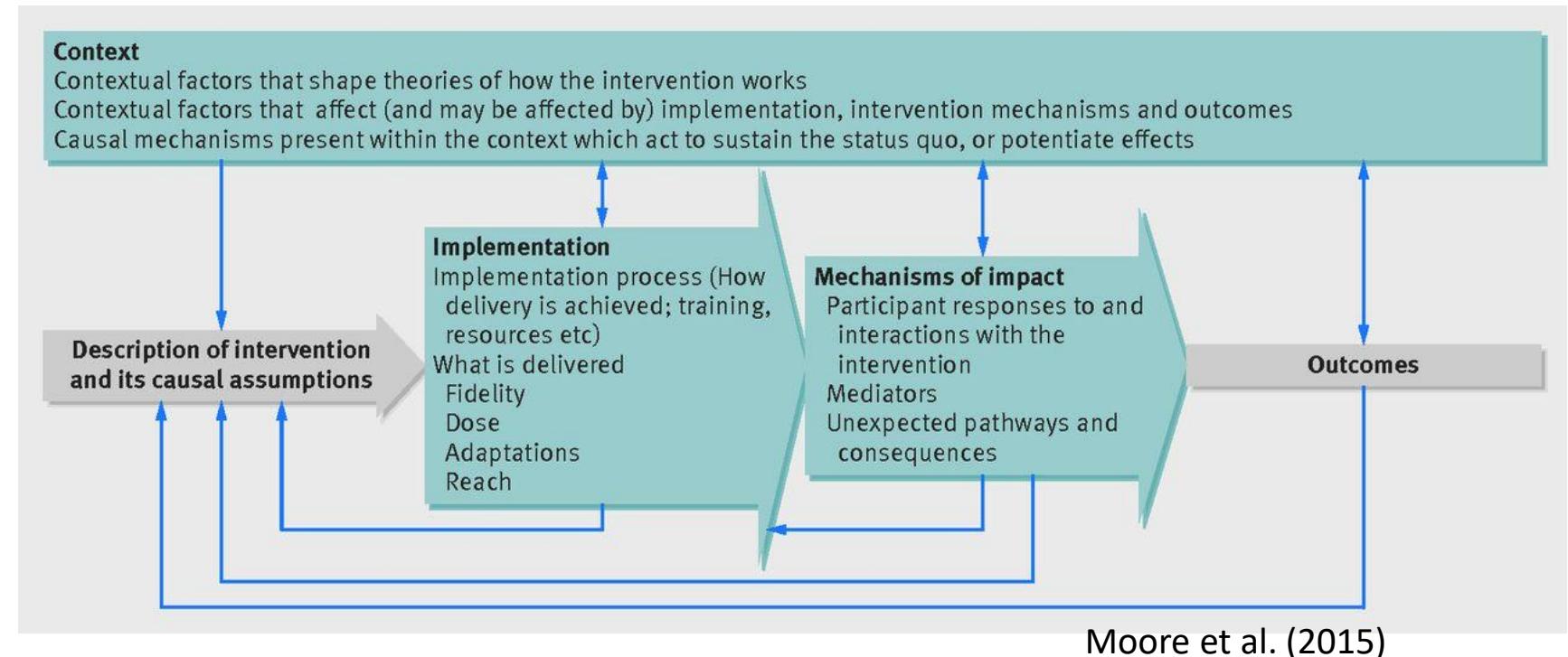


Aspects of implementation to consider

Dosage

Fidelity

Implementation
barriers and
facilitators



Rapid evaluations

- Real-time evaluation (RTE)
- Rapid evaluation method (REM)
- Rapid feedback evaluation (RFE)
- Rapid cycle evaluation (RCE)

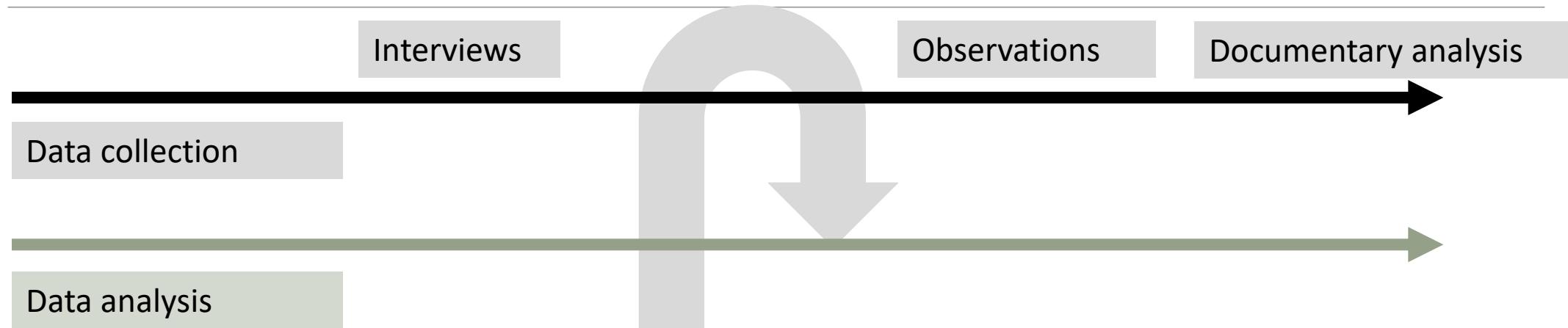
Rapid, Responsive, and Relevant? A Systematic Review of Rapid Evaluations in Health Care

**Cecilia Vindrola-Padros^{1,2}, Eugenia Brage³,
and Ginger A. Johnson^{4,2} **

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Iterative design



Ongoing summaries of data

- Short memos
- Tables or RAP sheets
- Site vignettes



Feedback loops

	Rapid Feedback Evaluation (RFE)	Rapid Cycle Evaluation (RCE)		
	Zakocs et al. (2015)	McNall et al. (2004)	Schneeweiss et al. (2015)	
1.	Clarify intent: Purpose, questions, study protocol	1. Collect existing data on program performance	1. Review research findings	1. Develop an analytic framework
2.	Collect “good enough” data: Collect and analyze data quickly	2. Collect new data on program performance	2. Translate findings into actions	2. Collect data (first round)
3.	Produce brief memo: Draft concise memo with main findings	3. Evaluate preliminary data	3. Make judgements based on findings	3. Analyze data and develop codebook
4.	Engage in reflective debrief: Discuss findings with project team	4. Share findings/recommendations with project team	4. Initiate implementation	4. Report findings
5.	Decide if more information is needed, take action or take no action	5. Develop and analyze alternative designs for full- scale evaluation	5. Make changes in implementation (if needed)	5. Collect data (second round) adding quantitative data
6.	Repeat feedback loops (steps 2-5)	6. Assist in developing policy and management decisions		Repeat cycle (steps 3- 5)

Vindrola-Padros et al. (2020)



Stakeholder steering/advisory groups

- **Purpose:**

- Advise on the intervention being evaluated
- Advise on the scope of the evaluation
- Identify competing evaluations
- Guarantee access to people, areas, documents
- Receive and implement findings
- Link with other relevant actors/organisations

- **Composition:**

- Senior member of the organisation or design/implementation lead of the programme/service
- People in charge of the day to day running of the programme/service
- People who receive services or use the programme
- People who might be involved in decision-making at a national or policy level
- People who might have been against or might be skeptical in relation to the benefits of the programme/service
- External organisations or actors doing similar work or planning to do similar work



Dissemination

Traditional evaluation *report* contents

- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Background
- Aims/research questions
- Design
 - Methods data collection
 - Sampling/recruitment
 - Methods data analysis
- Findings and discussion
 - Programme theory
 - Processes of implementation
 - Barriers and facilitators
- Recommendations and lessons (implications)

- Infographics
- Visual summaries
- Animations
- Short presentations
- Booklets or leaflets



Anticipating potential challenges

- Lack of agreement in scope
- Delays in implementation
- Lack of data/issues with access
- Lack of engagement from stakeholder group
- Sharing ‘uncomfortable’ findings
- Remaining a ‘critical friend’
- Who owns the findings?



In sum

- Qualitative evaluations can be summative or formative
- They tend to focus on the perspectives and practices of participants
- Qualitative evaluations pay close attention to the role of contextual factors in shaping an intervention or programme
- A programme theory might be used as a blueprint for the evaluation
- The evaluation team might explore the dosage, fidelity and factors that have acted as barriers or facilitators
- Rapid designs and feedback loops can be used to inform the delivery of the intervention
- Potential challenges encountered include: delays in implementation, lack of access and engagement, difficulties with the sharing and ownership over the findings.

